

Opening Statement
Chairman Ken Calvert (R-CA)
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
Committee on Science
U. S. House of Representatives
March 2, 2006
Hearing: NASA's Science Budget Overview

Mr. Chairman, I welcome Dr. Cleave and the rest of our distinguished witnesses today and look forward to hearing their testimony. Today's panel is quite impressive with its wide range of scientific backgrounds. Our Nation is lucky to have such distinguished advisers for the direction that our sciences should take. We thank you for your service.

Last Fourth of July, I went to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to see Deep Impact as it collided with a comet; I have looked in awe at the pictures that we are getting from the Hubble Space Telescope; I have watched news programs showing our Mars rovers just keep going. This is what great nations should do – explore! We must keep up these investments – in exploration, in science, and in aeronautics.

We are all aware that NASA Administrator Griffin is overseeing a delicate balance of the programs within his portfolio. Although the Administration is operating in a tight budget environment, in FY 2007, NASA did receive a small increase over the FY 2006 level. Now that the Congress has legislated its endorsement for the Vision for Space Exploration in our NASA Authorization of 2005, we must begin funding this program and its Crew Exploration Vehicle at an efficient level.

We are all aware of the need to keep our Nation competitive --NASA is an important part of the investment that our country must make to keep us at the leading edge. While we may not like the fact that available resources allow the Science programs at NASA to be funded at only a 1.5% increase, this important sector of NASA's budget is still about one-third of its total budget.

This is a lean budget year and we must maximize every penny. With the guidance of those scientists from the National Academies, I am confident that we are investing in the science that is most important to this country and to the world. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Cleave and our distinguished panel on how we will keep the United States at the forefront scientifically.

####

